THE LEGEND OF ONIKIRIMARU

CHAPTER 12: GINCHIYO'S DEMONIC WISH

KEI KUSUNOKI

DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE HUMANITY.
HUMANITY CREATES BOTH GODS AND DEMONS...
...AND A HUMAN CAN BECOME EITHER ONE.
VETERAN DEMON PRINCESS SUZUKA GOZEN A DEMON WHO FELL IN LOVE WITH HUMANITY AND MARRIED SAKANOUE TAMURAMARO.
HUMANS ARE WEAK, FRAGILE, AND SHALLOW, BUT ALSO NOBLE.
OF COURSE, THIS DOESN'T APPLY TO ALL HUMANS.

ROOOOAR
CLOP
CLOP
CLOP
CLOP
STAY AWAY, DEMONS!
DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT I AM THE ONLY DAUGHTER OF TACHIBANA DOUSETSU, AND THE MASTER OF TACHIBANA CASTLE?

ROOOOAR
AAH!
SCHING!
SL
ASH

GROWL
GYAH!
BEGONE, DEMONS. OR WOULD YOU STAND AGAINST SUZUKA, THE DEMON PRINCESS?

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ROAR

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, HUMAN CHILD?

ARE YOU… ARE YOU A DEMON AS WELL?

FEAR NOT, FOR I DO NOT EAT HUMANS.

IT IS NOT WISE TO COME HERE ALONE AT NIGHT.
BUT THE DEMONS WHO LURK IN THIS FOREST DO.
I WISH TO FULFILL MY FATHER'S DREAMS...
I MUST CLING TO THE GODS AND BUDDHAS WHO ARE SAID TO GRANT ANY DESIRE...
EVEN IF DEMONS DWELL HERE, I MUST MAKE MY PRAYERS AT THE TAROU INARI SHRINE HERE.
AND WHAT DESIRE IS THAT?

ALL RIGHT, I UNDERSTAND.
TRUE AUTHORITY RESTS WITH MY FATHER, BUT EVER SINCE THE YOUNG AGE OF SEVEN, I WAS TREATED LIKE A BOY, AND GRANTED THE RIGHT TO INHERIT HIS TITLE.
I WANT TO BE STRONGER, SO THAT AS MASTER OF THE CASTLE, I CAN STAND STRONG IN THESE TURBULENT TIMES.
THEN I SHALL WATCH OVER YOU. NO DEMON DARES DISOBEY ME.
A GIRL WHO WOULD WALK ALONE AT NIGHT WITHOUT FEAR OF DEMONS IS ALREADY VERY STRONG!

THE YEAR 1578
THE HEAD FAMILY OF THE TACHIBANA CLAN, THE OOTOMOS, SUFFERS A TERRIBLE DEFEAT AGAINST THE SHIMAZU ARMY OF SATSUMA AT THE BATTLE OF MIMIGAWA.
IT IS SAID THAT PRINCESS GINCHIYO FORMED A SQUAD OF FEMALE RIFLEMEN IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY.
I SHALL STAY WITH YOU UNTIL YOUR DREAM COMES TRUE.
WE WILL SHOW THEM THAT WOMEN CAN FIGHT TOO!
ALL WHO SAW HER AGREED THAT SHE WAS TRULY A VALIANT WAR LEADER.

1581, WHEN PRINCESS GINCHIYO WAS 13...
...SHE WED THE ELDEST SON OF TAKAHASHI JOU'UN, A RETAINER OF THE OOTOMO CLAN. HER HUSBAND'S NAME WAS MUNESHIGE.
IN 1585, HER FATHER, DOUSETSU, FELL IN BATTLE. HER HUSBAND MUNESHIGE ASSUMED CONTROL OF THE CLAN.
IN 1586, THE OOTOMO CLAN WAS WEAKENED AND SWORE ALLEGIANCE TO TOYOTOMI HIDEYOSHI.
IN HIS MARCH TO CONQUER ALL OF KYUUSHUU, LORD SHIMAZU OF SATSUMA ATTACKED AND BURNED CASTLE IWAYA, WHERE MUNESHIGE'S FATHER, TAKAHASHI JOU'UN, DWELLED.
NO, NOT YET!
HAS YOUR WISH COME TRUE NOW, GINCHIYO?

IN AUGUST OF THE SAME YEAR, TACHIBANA CASTLE WAS SURROUNDED BY AN ARMY OF 50,000 SHIMAZU SOLDIERS.
CURSE YOU! I WILL AVENGE MY FATHER!
YOU MUSTN'T!
WE SHOULDN'T ATTEMPT AN ALL-OUT ATTACK. LET'S WAIT FOR HIDEYOSHI'S REINFORCEMENTS.
PRINCESS GINCHIYO...
THE SHIMAZU ARMY WAS HIT HARD IN THE BATTLE OF IWAYA CASTLE.
THE MOORI FORCES OF TOYOTOMI'S ARMY HAVE CROSSED THE STRAIGHT! SHIMAZU IS RETREATING!
SMILE
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LORD MUNESHIGE! I DON'T KNOW IF PURSUIT WITH SUCH SMALL NUMBERS IS ADVISABLE-
PURSUE THEM IMMEDIATELY! FOLLOW ME!
PRINCESS, WHAT SHALL WE DO?
BRING ME MY HORSE. I SHALL FOLLOW HIM.
GINCHIYO-SAMA!
WHAT POINT IS THERE IN LIVING IF I CAN'T AVENGE MY FATHER?

MUNESHIGE'S PURSUIT WAS FIERCE, AND HE CAPTURED NOT ONLY TAKATORI CASTLE BUT RECOVERED IWAYA AS WELL.
BUT EVEN HE DIDN'T KNOW THAT BEHIND HIM WAS ONE WITH THE STRENGTH OF A DEMON.
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A FEMALE WARRIOR WHO SUPPORTS HER HUSBAND IN THE SHADOWS...
YOU'RE MORE LIKE A DEMON THAN A VALIANT PRINCESS.

WHO ARE YOU?
YOU KNOW WELL WHO I AM.
THE DEMON WHO SLAYS HIS FELLOW DEMONS. THE WIELDER OF THE BLADE ONIKIRI-MARU.
I HAVE COME TO SLAY A DEMON.
IT IS THE WAY OF HUMAN WARS FOR US TO SLAY OUR FELLOW MEN.
I AM SIMPLY A WIFE, HELPING HER HUSBAND.
FOR NOW.

WHEN YOU REVEAL YOUR TRUE NATURE... I SHALL COME TO SLAY YOU.
NEVER FORGET THAT, DEMON PRINCESS.
ALL I WANTED WAS TO BE STRONG, TO FULFILL MY FATHER'S DREAMS AND SUPPORT MY HUSBAND.

IF YOU WOULD CALL ME A DEMON PRINCESS, THEN DO SO!

IN 1592, HIDEYOSHI BEGAN HIS ATTACK ON KOREA, AND MUNESHIGE WENT WITH HIM.
THIS WAS KNOWN AS THE BUNROKU-KEICHOU WAR.
MUNESHIGE WAS HIGHLY PRAISED FOR HIS VICTORIES, AND MADE LORD OF YANAGIGAWA CASTLE IN CHIKUGO, WITH HOLDINGS OF 13,000 KOKU.
1587. THE SHIMAZU SURRENDED TO TOYOTOMI AND THE WARS IN KYUUSHUU CAME TO A TEMPORARY END.
SPLENDID! YOU ARE ONE OF THE GREATEST GENERALS OF THE AGE! AND YOUR LOYALTY IS THE GREATEST IN THE LAND!

WE WILL GUARD THE CASTLE IN LORD MUNESHIGE'S ABSENCE! WOMEN, YOU WILL PATROL THE GROUNDS!
PRINCESS GINCHIYO, LORD HIDEYOSHI HAS ORDERED YOU TO GO TO NAGOYA
HE HAS TAKEN THE WIVES OF SEVERAL OTHER MINOR DAIMYO.
HE IS KNOWN FOR HIS LOVE OF WOMEN, SO PLEASE BE CAREFUL...
LORD HIDE-YOSHI?
HEH

GINCHIYO, THE WIFE OF TACHIBANA MUNESHIGE, HAS ARRIVED!
ERK!
I ONCE WENT TO PRAY AT TAROU INARI SHRINE WITHOUT FEARING DEMONS.
WHAT HAVE I TO FEAR NOW?

T-TRULY YOU ARE THE WIFE OF A WARRIOR. I AM VERY IMPRESSED!
SHIVER
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EVEN THE LORD OF JAPAN WILL NOT GO AGAINST MY WILL.
"NO DEMON DARES DISOBEY ME."
WHO WAS IT THAT SAID THAT?

WHO WAS IT WHO HAS ALWAYS BEEN BY MY SIDE WHEN I WENT TO PRAY?
1598: HIDEYOSHI DIES OF ILLNESS.
WAS IT TRULY THE GODS AND BUDDHAS OF THE SHRINE WHO GRANTED MY WISH?
1600: THE BATTLE OF SEKIGAHARA BEGINS.

IT WAS FOR THIS MOMENT THAT I WANTED TO BE STRONG!
WE RIDE TO SAVE LORD MUNESHIGE IMMEDIATELY!
MUNESHIGE SIDES WITH THE FORCES OF ISHIDA, AND SUCCEEDS IN BRILLIANTLY OPENING THE GATES TO OOZU CASTLE, BUT THE ISHIDA FORCES ARE DEFEATED REGARDLESS.
HE RETREATS TO YANAGIGAWA.

IT'S ALL RIGHT NOW, LORD MUNESHIGE! LEAVE THE REST TO ME!
GINCHIYO?
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, LORD MUNESHIGE? I AM YOUR WIFE, GINCHIYO.
WHO ARE YOU?

NO...
THAT IS NOT MY WIFE!
SPLATTER

DRIVE THE NABESHIMA ARMY FROM THE SEA ROAD!
DON'T LET KATOU KIYOMASA INTO YANAGIGAWA!
KATOU KIYOMASA
I'D LIKE TO SAY THAT I'M IM-PRESSED...
...BY THE LADY MASTER OF TACHIBANA CASTLE, BUT...

KATOU KIYOMASA, WHERE ARE YOU?
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HALT, DEMON PRINCESS!
CLANG
OPEN YOUR EYES, SUZUKA GOZEN!
DO NOT CALL ME A DEMON PRINCESS!

DEMON PRINCESS?
SUZUKA GOZEN?
WHY WOULD YOU BECOME A DEMON AND STEAL AWAY HER LIFE?

IT CAN'T BE...
NO...
AH...
AH...
NO.
AAHH!
GROOOOWL
IF YOU WISH TO LIVE AMONG HUMANS, I HAVE NO PROBLEM WITH THAT.
BUT IF YOU WISH TO BECOME A DEMON AND PARTICIPATE IN THEIR WARS, THAT'S A DIFFERENT MATTER.

IF YOU ARE A DEMON, I WILL SLAY YOU.
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IS THIS WHO
I USED TO BE?

NO, IT'S NOT.
THIS IS POOR PRINCESS GINCHIYO, WHO WAS KILLED BECAUSE OF ME, EVEN THOUGH I PROMISED TO WATCH OVER HER!
ZSSSSSSSSH
IT'S STORMING TONIGHT. PRINCESS GINCHIYO WON'T BE COMING.
SPLATTER
I SMELL BLOOD.

CHOMP CHOMP
DAMN YOU, DEMONS!
SLICE
PRINCESS GINCHIYO!

PLEASE... GRANT MY WISH...
NO. PRINCESS GINCHIYO! DON'T DIE!
I CANNOT BETRAY MY FATHER'S HOPES...
I WANT TO BE STRONG.
WHERE IS BUDDHA?
WHY DOES HE NOT GRANT THE WISH OF A NOBLE GIRL LIKE THIS?

THEN I SHALL!
IF THE GODS AND BUDDHAS WILL NOT GRANT YOUR WISH...
PRINCESS GINCHIYO?
AND SO I TOOK THE FORM OF PRINCESS GINCHIYO...
I TOOK HER PLACE AND TRIED TO GRANT HER WISH...

DID PRINCESS GINCHIYO WANT TO BE A DEMON?
I... I...
THE TACHIBANA CLAN WAS DISBANDED AND MUNESHIGE BECAME A RONIN.
IT'S TIME TO GIVE HER BACK HER LIFE.
AND STARTING THEN, PRINCESS GINCHIYO FELL ILL, ALMOST AS IF SHE WERE DEAD.

GOMEI DISTRICT, TAKASE
GINCHIYO?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
PLEASE, TAKE MY LIFE, BUT SEND MY HUSBAND OUT INTO THE WORLD ONCE MORE.
GINCHIYO, ARE YOU WELL?

LORD MUNESHIGE! LADY GINCHIYO HAS JUST DIED!
LADY GINCHIYO...
IN THE MANSION OF ATSUYA IORI IN HARAAKA VILLAGE...
...IN 1602, GINCHIYO PASSED AWAY AT THE AGE OF 34.
WHOSE CORPSE IS THAT?
IT'S THE BODY OF GINCHIYO. I USED MAGIC TO MAKE IT APPEAR THAT SHE WAS NEAR DEATH.

IT OUGHT TO BE HER OWN BONES THAT ARE BURIED...
IT'S POSSIBLE THAT UNTIL NOW I'VE BEEN CONTROLLED BY GINCHIYO'S DYING WISH.
WHEN I SAW HER BEFORE, SHE HAD COME TO REBUKE ME.
NO... I THINK SHE CAME TO SAVE YOU.

HUMANS ARE TRULY WEAK, FRAGILE, AND SHALLOW...
BUT NOBLE...
IN THE FOLLOWING YEAR, 1603, TACHIBANA MUNESHIGE WAS BROUGHT BACK BY THE IEYASU CLAN TO BECOME THE DAIMYO OF TANAKURA IN MUTSU.
...OR BECAUSE OF THE WISH OF HIS DECEASED WIFE, GINCHIYO?
WAS THE REASON HE WAS CALLED BACK DESPITE BEING ON THE LOSING SIDE AT SEKIGAHARA BECAUSE OF HIS OWN TALENT...
BELIEVE WHICHEVER YOU PREFER.